ISSUE 150 MARCH 2021

KNOTTING MATTERS

The Magazine of the International Guild of Knot Tyers

INTERNATIONAL GUILD OF KNOT TYERS

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KNOTTING MATTERS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
INTERNATIONAL GUILD OF KNOT TYERS

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The editors welcome the submission of letters, articles, photographs and sketches for publication. Correspondence may be by e-mail **knottingmatters@igkt.net** but more extensive items, such as articles for publication, as well as any pictures, which should be of good quality, need to be sent as attachments. All submissions must include their author's name and e-mail or postal address.

If events are to be publicised in *Knotting Matters*, note the months of publication- March, June, September and December. Although the deadline for the next issue is given at the foot of the Contents page, please note that the editors begin putting it together at least three weeks earlier.

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KNOTTING MATTERS

Issue 150 March 2021

2	Editorial	30	Mother Nature Gets Knotted
3	Letters to the Editor	31	Amateur Ropemaking in Yorkshire
8	The Evolution of *KM* Design	32	Tom Bowling
12	Ropemaking in Scotland	34	A Hitch that Hiked the Spirits
16	Online Workshops	36	Trefoil with 8-Strand Plait
19	New Guinea Knot Work	39	Knot Art
21	Mr Murch's Bellrope	40	Length of Cord for Monkey's Fists
22	Military Engineering	43	Publications
24	Popping Round the Corner	44	Book Review
28	Novel Rope Access Material	45	Branch News Branch Details
29	Farrimond Friction Hitch	49	IGKT Supplies

PLEASE NOTE: LETTERS & ARTICLES FOR THE JUNE 2021 *KNOTTING MATTERS* MUST BE RECEIVED BY 13th MAY

FRONT COVER: Liz Pawson's original design for the IGKT logo **see p8**

EDITORIAL

This edition will make a full year of *Knotting Matters* produced in the brave new world of Covid-19. We, the Editors, are very grateful to all our members who have turned to and produced some interesting articles. Not all of them have come from the 'usual suspects', whose efforts, it should be noted, make up more than a quarter of this issue. We are particularly pleased also to have received letters and articles from several 'first-timers'; we hope they found it easier than they had imagined. Please may we have many more contributions from all of you, *KM* won't survive without you.

We applaud the notion behind Robert Nash's *tour de force* on estimating the length of cord required for Monkey's Fists (p40). It should surely come under the heading Applied Mathematics: very well applied in our view. Any relation to the Nobel Prize-winning mathematician of the same name?

This is a significant issue of *KM*, the 150th. The first article traces a little of its history, and the enclosed Scale Card is included by way of a modest celebration initiated by the Trustees. On this occasion, we consider the Scale Card to be our pullout. While we have received messages affirming the value of the pullouts, we are not receiving ideas for small projects that could interest young and new knotters. As we have said before, we are happy to help produce the pullout, but we would like to receive some suggestions as to the subject!

It is months since *KM* 149 left the printers, and we have been notified that some of you have still not received your copy. We have therefore asked the Membership Secretary to send you a pdf version, while hoping that the hard copy will eventually arrive. If you have not received your copy or the pdf, please contact the Membership Secretary. In future, if you do not receive your copy by the middle of the month following the month of publication, do get in touch.

As Covid continues to be a threat and face-to-face meetings remain impossible, the Trustees have taken the early decision to cancel the AGM as a meeting and to hold it by Zoom instead. Please do read the documentation enclosed and, should you wish to participate, follow the directions given to register. It is a chance for some who might never have felt able to travel to a meeting to join in.

On the same subject, the Dorset, Midlands and Yorkshire branches in the UK have had successful meetings via the Guild's Zoom account (p45). We look forward to receiving reports from others doing so.

Stay safe. Maurice, Gordon, David.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Maurice,

Commit in haste repent at leisure

I recently noticed three things: a badly frayed end of nylon rope, a chopping block, and an axe.

On impulse I thought, 'just get rid of that' and with one swipe failed dismally to remove the offensive fray, but did succeed in forcing the strands irretrievably into the wood, leaving me with a fluffy block and the task of finding my knife, which is what I should have done in the first place.

In my defence and for members' edification, see *ABOK* #120 and #121. I suspect the real culprit here is the nylon. The material shown in *ABOK* would have been natural, not artificial. Yet another of life's irritations, issued free at the point of use, to teach us a lesson and to make each of us a better person.

W Kerr

Hi Maurice,

(re *KM* 148. Deck Boy to Sling Designer) Dad asked me to send you an email with a few amendments, I blame this on his handwriting :)

1. Ships he mostly served on were general cargo ships such as Blue Star, Portline and tankers of Shell Tankers UK, not as quoted, bulk carriers.
2. Ships running to Vietnam during the war were the H Class of 19,000 DW Tonne belonging to Shell Tankers, not their VLCC.
3. Sling on last page is his short length super flexible non-kinkable variety that he developed. The one on the back cover has a breaking load of 64 tonnes on a straight pull.

It may be hard to understand this; after 37 years, I still don't!

Katrina Coulter

Editors' apologies for any of the errors that were ours.

Dear Maurice,

Owen makes some stimulating contributions to *KM*, but he needs to better track what he and others write. Chasing his ideas is fun, but weeding out the bad citations is work - better done prior to publishing.

In *KM* 146 pp10-11, Owen re-presents some single Bowlines on a Bight. Unfortunately, the images and captions were confused or missing (as judged by textual references); and one assertion of prior presentation wrong. But he's spot-on about it being odd that these knots were not discovered sooner? One can almost just take the commonly known Bowline on a Bight, which has twin eyes, and erase one eye and twin part in the knot and have a single-eyed Bowline on a Bight! Just back out one SPart from the knot body, and then make the 'backflip' as I call it and voila!

The *KM* presentations have covered 3 of 4 immediate such knots, to wit: *KMs* 19 p2 & 20 p7 (John Smith), 26 p15 (#5), 42 p11 (#1, #3-4; Owen, his 1st pass), 55 p39 (Charlie Smith), & 57 p52 (John Smith again?).

To illustrate this quartet, consider a bowline with eye hanging down such that the nipping loop has an anti-clockwise rotation and the outgoing eye leg crosses under the SPart. (this is the side of a Bowline that should be presented but never is, the side usually shown for the Sheet Bend!). Now we can complete the simple knot by reeving the tail around the SPart clockwise for a 'tail outside' (Ashley's 'left-handed', *ABOK* #1034.5) or anti-clockwise for a 'tail inside' (*ABOK* #1010) Bowline.

In each case, the tail can be immediately taken back to tuck out through the collar on the right side (viewer's) of our given arrangement of the SPart. Or, one can first pass the tail under the returning eye leg, so making an X crossing, and then tuck it out through the collar.

The surest, best version is that shown by John Smith long ago, which is the tail inside and crossed under; it is what one gets by what I now call 'fore<=>aft'ing' (of an eye knot): fusing an Angler's (Perfection) loop's (*ABOK* #1017) SPart and tail together (to become the new eye) and cutting the eye (to be new SPart & tail); load as the new SPart the part going to the 'bowlinesque' loop component of the knot, not the overhand component as is loaded for *ABOK* #1017. (It is the tail-outside crossed under version that has not been shown; as it's the least stable, that's a good thing.)

And Owen returned with Bowlines at *KM* 148:17-8, here rediscovering a knot and naming it 'Lockdown'. Owen writes "I have never seen this version documented before, which I find surprising." Indeed it is surprising, as it's much in the open, as *ABOK* #1033 Carrick loop.

So, as Heinz dismisses the common Bowline (*ABOK* #1010) as unsafe for climbing at page 9, Owen suggests this other in its place. Well, while *ABOK* #1033 is not quite so easily loosened (by jostling, etc.), it's not as robustly secure in kernmantle climbing ropes as one would want, and there are so many better knots out there, many yet to be made known.

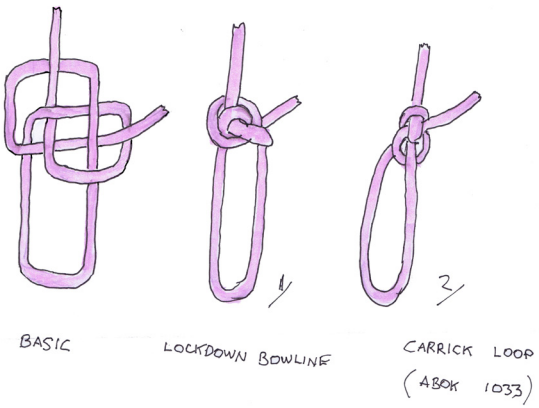
(And now I'll return to my own knotty confusions, which seem to be multiplying!)

Dan Lehman

Hello Maurice,

In defence of the Lockdown Bowline. In response to two letters in *KM* 149. One by John Heselton: that my Lockdown Bowline was *ABOK* #1443. "This is just a weak bend" (Ashley's words). And in Robert Birch's letter: "Lockdown Bowline is *ABOK* #1033 (Carrick loop)" which is wrong. The clue is in the second drawing of this knot. Both knots start with the same configuration.

The Lockdown Bowline is tightened by pulling the standing part and the loop in opposite directions (as you would a normal Bowline) to complete the knot, figure 1.



With the Carrick loop *ABOK* #1033 (with the knot closed) the standing part and right-hand side of the loop are pulled in opposite directions to distort the knot (to make the second drawing, figure 2). This is alright with cord but not with climbing rope as it is reluctant to distort. This loop forms the basis of several knots: the Chinese Button knot *ABOK* #599, Bosun's Whistle knot *ABOK* #787, a Diamond knot.

Ashley's Carrick loop *ABOK* #1033 is not a true Carrick loop. The loop is on one side of the knot and the working ends are on the opposite side of the loop.

The Carrick loop is based on the Check or Delay knot *ABOK* #1559 without all the over and under combinations.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s a group of eminent knotsmen corrected mistakes in *ABOK*. This was sent to the publishers of *ABOK* who replied that it would be too costly to publish a book with all the corrections, but would add a supplement to future books (I have not seen one yet).

Owen K Nuttall

Dear Maurice,

Having read Owen Nuttall's comment about the use of the Constrictor knot as a restraint - not handcuff as the wrists are not held separately - I was reminded of something I read many years ago about a Parisian detective in the late Victorian days when violent gangs were common.

He used a much shorter cord and tied the thumbs of his captives together behind the back with what may have been a constrictor. Knotting details were not given but even a Clove Hitch secured with a Reef would probably suffice.

This is very effective especially if a fine but strong fishing line, preferably braided, or a kevlar or Dyneema cord is used.

It should be applied below the knuckle joint when the thumbs are placed one on top of the other.

When pulled tight there is a danger of cutting off the blood supply to the thumbs but as you are only going to use this on someone who you do not like, the finer points of Health and Safety or ethics need not be of concern.

Richard Hopkins

Hi Maurice,

What a surprise to see my name mentioned in *KM* 149 and a nice comment from Frank. If anyone is interested, I managed to have 37 poppies available on our stall in the High Street and they were all sold.

Unfortunately we were there for only three days instead of our usual six, but we did take £4,745, of which at least £185 was from the sale of my poppies.

So I am well pleased and have already started on next year's batch.

Bill Marshall

Dear Maurice,

A Hidden Treasure: For those Guild members who don't know, there is a worldwide activity known as Geocaching. It has been around since 2000 and uses Global Positioning Satellites.

With a GPS receiver or a smart phone, participants locate hidden containers known as geocaches. Inside the container is generally a logbook of some description, where the player can record their visit, which can also be entered on the geocache's information page at www.geocaching.com and adds to the player's score.

There are of course many more varieties of geocache other than a simple container. These geocaches are set and maintained by players around the world. What has this got to do with knot-tying you ask?

Among the IGKT members, there are a number of geocachers. Indeed, in order

to promote the work of the Guild, a quantity of 'Travel Bugs' with the IGKT logo and website address were produced and released by Guild members (see *KM* 138 p12). Travel bugs are moved from cache to cache. Some have a specific goal, others are just moved at random.

Recently, while walking in the countryside of Northamptonshire, UK, this geocaching couple stumbled across a series of geocaches with a knot theme. The containers, each about the size of a cigar tube, were named after a particular knot. Inside was an example of the knot, a brief description and some cord with a challenge to the finder to tie the knot described. Needless to say, we rose to the challenge.

On return to base, we spent some time logging our finds online with a description of our experiences and adding a link to the IGKT website. These online logs will be viewed by other players, especially those who may have some difficulty locating the hidden cache!

Not being satisfied with just logging our finds, we decided to contact the cache owner via the website and congratulate them on laying such an interesting series of geocaches. The cache owner turned out to be a District Commissioner with Northamptonshire Scouts who was delighted to be contacted by a member of the IGKT. As a result, we have been able to provide a number of knot-related activities that will be shared with leaders in the district, and promote the IGKT.

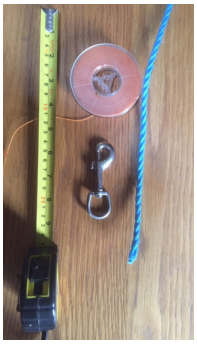
Slow_Gin

Dear Maurice,

Young mum bent over double, pushing small voluble boy in pedal car. Thought 'I can fix that, 5 minute job'. No time at all, happier small boy, very happy mum, big smiles all round, no need for impending chiropractic services.

Another episode from the wonderful world of practical knotting. Never ceases to amaze me how little it takes to make people happy.

N King



The Evolution of Knotting Matters

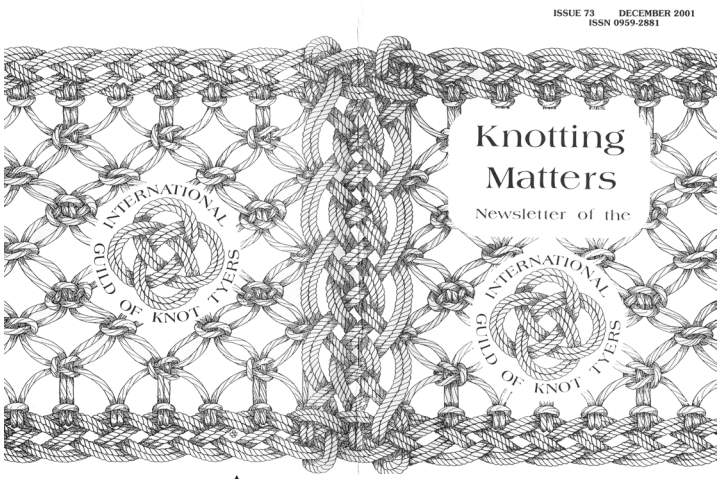
by Messrs McPartlan, Pepper and Teenan

When the first issue of *Knotting Matters* appeared in October 1982, just six months after the Guild's inaugural meeting aboard the RRS Discovery, 45 copies were needed, some mailed to members in Europe and Asia. In choosing the name, *Knotting Matters* (*KM*), Geoffrey Budworth, its founder and first editor, was influenced by a local history magazine called *Crystal Palace Matters*.

He produced *KM* 1 consisting of 16 typed, photocopied, stapled A4 pages.

The graphics on the cover were, in Geoffrey Budworth's words "not ideal" and "over-priced" to the point that he paid for them himself, "too embarrassed to show it in the Guild's accounts". The cover also featured the Guild's logo, of which more later.

KM kept its A4 format until *KM* 35 (SPRING 1991) when it shrank to A5 and, in passing, acquired the ISSN 0959-2881 number which first appeared on the cover of *KM* 31 (SPRING 1990).



Following 18 editions of *KM* using the original cover design, *KM* 19 (SPRING 1987) appeared with a beautiful macramé design, created by Stuart Grainger with his monogram tucked away on the back page. This design appeared for the last time on *KM* 75 (JUNE 2002).

Between 1987 and 2002 other seemingly 'minor' changes in appearance had taken place, such as the typeface for the Issue Number and Date which changed with the introduction of the ISSN number in *KM* 31 (SPRING 1990) then changed again in *KM* 35 (SPRING 1991) and yet again in *KM* 36 (JULY (SUMMER) 1991) when the typeface became bold and continued with the same appearance until the introduction of colour and a new cover design in *KM* 76 (September 2002).

These 'minor' changes, including dating editions by month or season and printing the cover on coloured card, hint however, at greater changes that were afoot as the editorial work moved from typewriter to computer and from photocopier to printers – first indication being Gipping Press at the foot of the cover of *KM* 36.

Having gone through, what we felt to be a rather tedious process (we hope that the above information will be saved somewhere to the Guild website and eventually added to or even corrected), we now feel free to focus on the topic that interested us the most at the outset: the Guild logo, as it goes beyond *KM*.

The logo of the Guild was designed and drawn by Liz Pawson and features the Guild's name around a flat 3Lx4B Turks Head, in which the four bights represent the four corners of the world.

The illustration of the TH was very realistic showing the strands and the yarns of the rope with the staggered ends coming together at 3 o'clock on the inside bights. This overall design of the 3Lx4B flat TH has continued to this day with changes in detail.

The logo that first appears on the cover of *KM* 19 (April 1987) was revised by Stuart Grainger with his version showing less detail of the yarns – making for a lighter image – except at the crossings, where the yarns help give a shadow or 3-D effect.

The other change that Stuart Grainger made was to rotate the TH through 90 degrees so that the staggered ends were at 6 o'clock. Whether this was a conscious decision or an accident, we don't know.

From *KM* 76 when the cover changed to coloured photos the logo (top right corner) appeared in a complimentary colour to show up on the cover background.

Sadly, Stuart Gringer's design when reduced in size, did not transpose well as the yarn detail at the crossings looked more like splodges on the image.

From *KM* 101 the logo appeared in the bottom left corner as black in a black square either on the background image when it was light in colour or, failing that, the background inside the square was filled with white.

In 2010, after some 24 years of Stuart Grainger's version of the logo, *KM* 106 appeared with the coloured logo with its characteristic black writing and tilted R on a white background, around a golden TH on a blue background all on a white square with a black border. Lindsey Philpott, the then editor remembers "Dan Machowski was President at that time (March 2010) and it was he and Guild Secretary, Barry Mault who formalized the outcome…. I have no specific notes claiming who invented the design, nor of any committee or group that designed it". Does anyone know more about this?

Editor	Issues	Dates
Geoffrey Budworth	*KM*s 1-27	1982-1989
Robert Jackson	*KM*s 28-36	1989-1991
Gordon Perry	*KM*s 37-47	1991-1995
"Vacancy" G Perry	*KM* 48	1995
Lonnie and Margaret Boggs	*KM*s 49-65	1995-1999
Colin Grundy	*KM*s 66-100	2000-2008
Lindsey Philpott	*KM*s 101-130	2008-2016
McPartlan, Pepper & Teenan	*KM*s 131-	2016-

When we took over as the editorial team for the June 2016 issue, we made four fundamental decisions about the cover design. The first was that there should be four different background colours to reflect the four seasons (green-March, yellow-June, orange-September and blue-December) each in a 20% tint, chosen so that the title, particularly the issue number and date, as well as the logo, would stand out clearly.

The second was that the logo would always appear with no background. Until June 2016, in order to stand out, the logo had to appear within the white box in which it was designed, or the cover had to include a white section so the white box containing the logo wasn't revealed. By removing the logo's background, the design would appear on any underlying background without the white box.

The third was to 'tidy up' the logo. The R of INTERNATIONAL had always been tilted slightly forwards, since the coloured logo first appeared, and was corrected. And the colours were altered, the yellow made gold, and the blue much darker (but not Navy Blue which would have been fine but in print looked almost black). The outer circle was improved for the December issue. The fourth decision was that the logo on the cover would always sit centred above the title as it has ever since.

Why it's 'Tyer', not 'Tier'

from our UK media correspondent

Why are we Guild members all 'tyers' and not 'tiers'? is a question often asked. While dyers dye, flyers fly and fryers fry, surely, critics point out, tying is to tie? Our defence is that 'tier', when it rhymes with pier, is commonly taken to mean a rank, file or storey. Now, we have support from an unexpected source. On 25th November 2020, in the BBC1 programme *The Repair Shop*, a wheelwright, the latest in his family with a Royal Warrant, explained that the metal hoop shrunk to fit wooden wheels is called a *'tyre'* because *it ties together* hub, spokes and rim.

Editors' Note: The wheelwright's explanation is at odds with the Oxford English Dictionary's (OED) more plausible etymology, viz

Tire[1] *(*forms Tyr, Tyer, Tier*):* (an obsolete form of attire): apparatus, equipment, accoutrement, outfit.

Tire[2] *(*forms Tyre, Tier, Tire*):* probably the same word as Tire[1], the tire being originally the 'attire', 'clothing' or 'accoutrement' of a wheel: eg a rim of metal encompassing the wheel of a vehicle, consisting of a circular hoop of iron or steel.

But we have no need to 'defend' the Guild's use of tyer. The OED also gives

Tier (also Tyer): One who ties; specially a person employed to tie something.

Ropemaking in Scotland

by Richard Hopkins

It will come as no surprise to those who know me that during the lockdown period I bought some books. One of these contained two articles from the magazine *Gwerin* from 1961 about ropemaking on Scottish farms during the last century. *Gwerin* was the first periodical devoted to Folk Life in Britain and ran from 1956 to 1962. The title is the Welsh for 'folk', but the periodical covered the whole of the British Isles.

The articles start with a couplet from *The Wouing of Jok and Jynny* from 1568 that introduces the word 'thrawcrook', a word which does not reappear for almost 200 years. The English might call some variations of it a wimble, but there were many local versions of thrawcrook depending on where it was made and when.

The author explores the etymology comparing Irish and Scots Gaelic terms, and relates how a report from the 18th century describes "horses accoutred in a very uncouth manner with breechings made of rushes and yoked to the plough by ropes of hair twined upon the thrawcrook, from the clippings of the manes and the cows' tails."

It is easy to understand the technique described to make hair rope by twisting six strands of the same length with the thrawcrook turning clockwise. The strands are then twisted in pairs anticlockwise to give three strands.

Two of these are next twisted clockwise and the third strand is laid in by hand along the cord as the thrawcrook can only twist two strands at a time. This technique was in use until about 100 years ago for making hair reins. The laying in of the last strand will be familiar to anyone who has made a grommet.

There is talk of witches using ropes to steal the milk from cows, and there was a report from 1900 that the hair ropes made from the long hair on the tails of Highland cattle were used as cart ropes. Ropes could also be made from heather using the same tool.

The thrawcrook was a stick from two to three feet long and about an inch in diameter with a natural or artificially formed crook. At one end is a swivel to tie the crook around the waist and allow it to rotate.

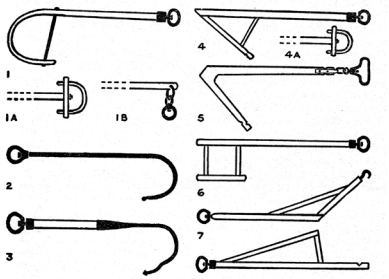


FIGURE 2. 1—After Low, 1834; 1A—South Uist, after Sayce; 1B—From the Highland Folk Museum, Kingussie; 2-4—East Lothian, in the National Museum of Antiquities; 5—From the Smith Institute, Stirling, after a sketch by the Curator, J. K. Thomson; 6—Berwickshire, after Sayce; 7—Orkney, from a sketch by W. S. Moar; 8—Berwickshire, from a sketch by J. L. McDougal.

This style needed a wide sweep and is probably better for straw ropes than for hair which is better twisted on a later version of thrawcrook shaped more like a bucket handle or brace and bit, which was first recorded in about 1850 although it must have existed quite a lot earlier.

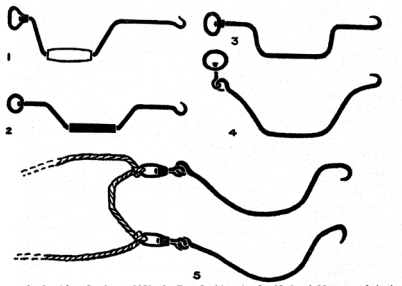


FIGURE 3. 1—After Stephens, 1851; 2—East Lothian, in the National Museum of Antiquities; 3-4—Angus, in the Glenesk Trust Folk Museum, after sketches by the Curator, Miss M. F. Michie; 5—Stirlingshire, in the National Museum of Antiquities.

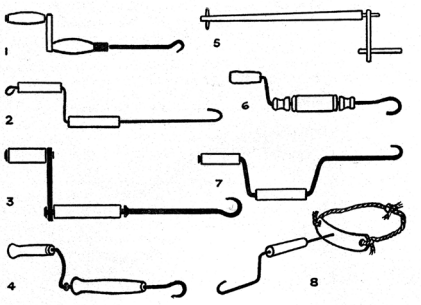


FIGURE 4. 1—After Stephens, 1851; 2—Ross-shire, in National Museum of Antiquities; 3—Midlothian, in National Museum of Antiquities; 4—Aberdeenshire, in National Museum of Antiquities; 5—In the West Highland Museum, Fort William, after a sketch by Miss E. Macgregor; 6—Ayrshire, in National Museum of Antiquities; 7—Orkney, after a sketch by W. S. Moar; 8—Orkney, after a sketch by P. K. I. Leith.

The ultimate design was even more like a brace and bit with a sleeved handle to reduce friction on the operating hand, though sleeved handles had been known earlier. They could be made from fencing wire, but longer-lasting versions were often blacksmith-made. Records from 1839 in Midlothian show that they cost one shilling (5p) but by 1898 this has risen to two shillings (say £13.00 today).

When binder twine was introduced, ropes could be made more easily and a new style of twister was produced with three hooks. There are many different designs and life must have been so much easier, although straw and hair could also be used on these devices.

One version has extensions on the side supports to fit in a doorway and take the strain off the operator while another style extends the frame so that it can be weighted down and held on a convenient support.

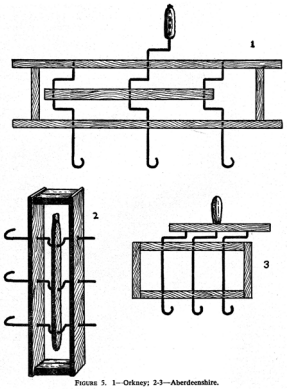


FIGURE 5. 1—Orkney; 2-3—Aberdeenshire.

Of particular interest to me was a machine introduced in the 1840s, using bevel gears enclosed in a wooden box slung around the neck and waist. The turning handle is at the side and looks vaguely like a basic barrel organ, but is lacking a monkey to dance on top.

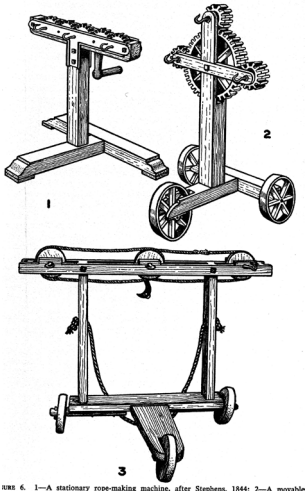
I have one of these winders and the gears mesh smoothly and I have made cord with it successfully, although the skill is that of the person feeding the straw

or hair into the system and walking backwards at the same time. However with binder twine this requirement is not needed and one person operation is possible.

The only other example of this style that I know of is in Des Pawson's museum, though part of the wooden box is missing. Reports suggest that it was not popular on first introduction, as the side handle prevented best use of the muscles in the arm when winding. I have had no difficulty but admittedly have not used it as much as a farmer might.

By the 1830s the larger farms and estates could afford machines closer to those with which we are familiar today. A cast iron machine made by Messrs Maxton of Alloa cost two pounds ten shillings (say £350 today) so would have been out of reach of the small farmers.

However, wooden versions could be made which are very similar to a device shown in many Boy Scout publications. They did not all require expensive gears and a continuous rope drive was not uncommon.



URE 6. 1—A stationary rope-making machine, after Stephens, 1844; 2—A movable e-making machine, after Low, 1847; 3—A movable rope-making machine from East Lothian. In the National Museum of Antiquities.

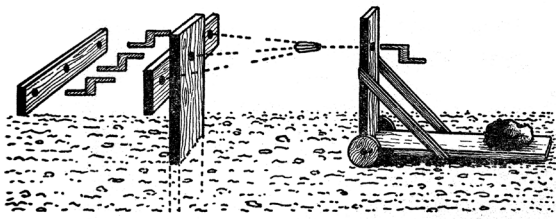


FIGURE 7. An exploded view of the Shetland 'tuimikins'.

These machines need a top to help lay the rope evenly. It had different names depending on the locality: a *snudder* on Orkney, and a *snott* on Shetland, but the term *tap* or *topper* was more widely used.

An Aberdeen variation consists of a handle with four holes through which the strands are passed before being twisted either from a three/four hooked twister or by three separate thrawcrooks working together, with a fourth thrawcrook working in the opposite direction to lay up the rope.

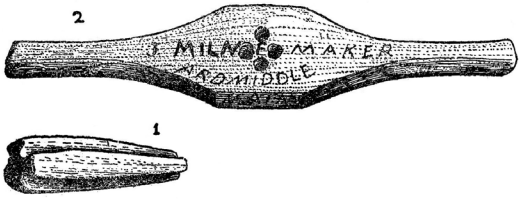


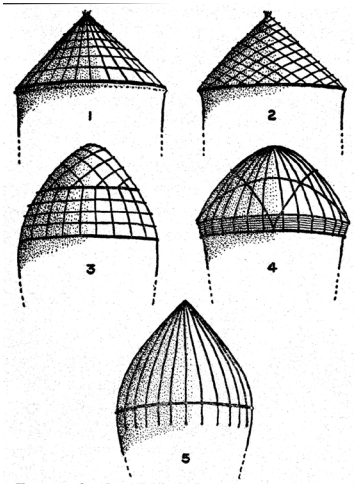
FIGURE 8. 1—A strand-layer from Orkney; 2—A strand-layer from Aberdeenshire, for use with binder-twine.

The technique for making the straw ropes, described in 1844, required two people. The spinner, usually a man, sits by a pile of straw and lets out the rope to the helper who uses the thrawcrook which was crank-shaped.

A doubled twist of straw is fixed to the end of the thrawcrook and more straw is added by the 'letter out' while the assistant gradually pulls away rotating the thrawcrook.

He adds straw from his right hand while supporting the twist of rope in his left. To produce a rope of even thickness, the spinner must not allow the twist of the rope, applied by the thrawcrook, to spread back beyond the ball of the thumb of his left hand while his fingers are squeezing the loose ends of the straw being fed in by the right hand. Violinists were considered to be good at this as they were used to constant fingering. A couple of other methods were described but they do not seem to be as simple as this one.

The completed rope was made into oval balls. This enabled the rope to be passed easily over the straw ricks to hold down the thatch that protected them from the weather.



Depending on the pattern, the method for throwing the ropes over the ricks varied and sometimes a heavy thick straw rope was used to encircle the eaves of the rick and act as an anchor when the other ropes changed direction.

I confess to being confused by the description of the work, but the finished effect is similar to some of the ball coverings seen in more conventional decorative knotting although with wider gaps between the strands.

These days, of course, covered ricks are hardly ever seen, but I remember in my childhood seeing nets being used over haystacks in South Wales. The nets, I believe, were ready-made and not formed from straw. Today, we see black plastic-wrapped bales which although much more efficient are nowhere near as attractive.

Do not think that straw rope has been forgotten. I recently saw an advertisement for a rope-making machine in China that was specifically for making two strand straw rope utilising rice straw, but this is far more sophisticated (and expensive) than the devices I have been discussing.

Online Workshops

by Phil 'the rope' Cook

Blesma

THE LIMBLESS VETERANS

Considering the fabulous times Barry Mault and I had working with BVUK (Blind Veterans) in Llandudno a few years ago, I jumped at the chance of working with another group of veterans, this time Blesma (limbless veterans).

I knew from BVUK days that veterans really have a 'can do' attitude, so I was confident this would be fun. New challenges here, though, because workshops would be held remotely via Zoom, which was relatively new to me, so whilst Blesma members were learning knots, I'd be learning Zoom.

Where to start, then? It was important that each workshop produced a finished project, so I decided a Solomon Bar would be appropriate. One, because square knotting is fairly easy, and two, it forms the basis for so many projects.

We made a simple zip-pull in the first workshop, which could also be used as a key fob. As usually happens with Solomon bars, some, accidentally or otherwise, managed to produce a twisted version!

Whilst Barry and I were presented with unique challenges at BVUK, because their members were either visually impaired or even completely blind, we at least had the benefit of teaching face-to-face. Teaching remotely via Zoom offered its own challenges.

I produced documents and videos for the workshops, which I would work through on screen. The correct pace of teaching was very much guesswork, as it was necessary to 'mute' everyone else whilst I was talking/demonstrating. Fielding questions was therefore not as easy as in a classroom. One couldn't easily see what people were up to! That meant that spotting mistakes quickly was very difficult, as members would be tying their knots flat on a table (NOT where their web cams were looking!)

WORKSHOP 2 - Turks Heads! Ambitious eh? Not at all. Everyone was provided with a foam tube and some pins in order to tie a 5 bight x 3 lead Turks Head.

No video for this one, which, in hindsight, was a mistake on my part. I relied on following documented instructions and talking everyone through the tying sequence. Most members managed OK, but a video would have helped. We slid the knot off the tube to make a coaster, rather than a napkin ring. This was deliberate, because in Workshop 3, we would be making a poppy, from the same Turks Head, in time for Remembrance Day.

We finished off Workshop 2 with a perennial favourite - Paracord Pals! Yes, I did use a video for this one, and I believe everyone coped quite well.

Looking good now, and really looking forward to Workshop 3 - the poppy!

In the meantime, it was obvious that some were getting the hang of things quicker than others, which was only natural of course. I had in mind three options for the centre of the poppy we were going to make, one of which, I was convinced would be beyond beginners - a single-strand Star knot. Loz, one of the lady members, managed one very quickly - it took me ages to master a single-strand Star knot!

Definitely required for **WORKSHOP 3** was a video to aid understanding of tying around a cylinder. I thought this particularly important, as there was going to be at least one newcomer!

For those who got there quicker than others, I needed something in reserve to occupy them. Seeing as we'd already tied a Solomon bar, I issued a challenge to make a 'Cobra bar' bracelet using the techniques we'd used for the zip pull and for Paracord Pals.

WORKSHOPS 4 & 5 looked at a couple of Christmas-tree decorations, the first being a tree based on yet another Solomon bar!

The other decoration was a snowflake, based on a series of Snake knots (the design was one from WhyKnot's YouTube Channel).

It took a while to master the Christmas tree, so we squeezed in Workshop 5 in December to do the snowflake. I found it ironic that the snowflake proved so much easier for everyone to master than the tree - a great note to finish 2020 on!

This has been a wonderful experience, and by the time you read this we'll be well into 2021 workshops. I'm looking forward to the day when the pandemic is over, and I can meet some of my new friends in person.

I'll be eternally grateful to Sarah Payne, Outreach Officer (South West) for Blesma, for inviting me to get involved with such a fabulous bunch of folks, and for organising and running all the Zoom meetings.

Make sure you read all the information concerning the 2021 AGM on May 8th enclosed in this magazine

New Guinea Knot Work

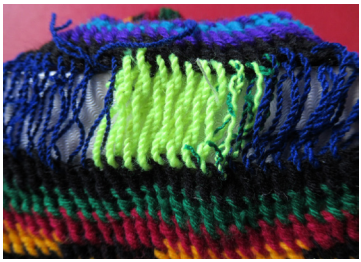
by Frank Brown

I was hoping to have the title to this article in Pidgin, but the on-line translator would not cooperate.

Several months ago Editor Maurice asked a few Australian members if we might think of gathering some information about the knots used by Australian Aborigines. I began investigating and then Covid interrupted proceedings. Maybe I will have something to report next year. Meantime, a neighbour in the retirement village where we now hang out told me she had a couple of handmade items she picked up in the New Guinea highlands in the 1960s. These turned out to be two colourful pieces.

The first resembled a tea cosy and I think is probably a Papua New Guinea style beanie. The other was a 'Bilum', the PNG version of the string shopping bag, on steroids.

The beanie appears to be made with machine-produced knitting yarn. I suspect that it is made from synthetic fibres but with only a hand lens available, and unwilling to apply a heat test, I was unable to verify this. I also presume that the yarn had been dyed with modern dyestuffs.



As best as I could judge, some form of half-hitching had been employed, with remarkably even application. The rows of hitching were interspersed with open mesh type of hitching, for either decorative or cooling purposes.

The most interesting feature to me was the way two yarns had been joined, with what I can only describe as a version of a long splice. In a moment of lunacy I once made up a long splice in some 3mm cotton, not very well, and so can appreciate the deftness of the crafter.

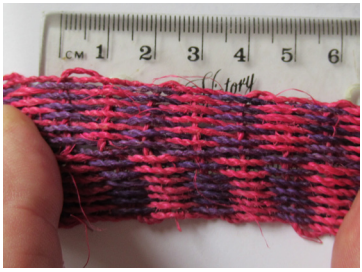
The other item, the Bilum, was an altogether different piece of work. The method of use is shown in the photo, where I persuaded my wife to pose with a load. I have been told that the ladies who tote these carrier bags load them heavily with a wide variety of articles, often including a baby, hence the teddy bear.

The material used in the construction is a natural fibre which I believe was obtained from a type of agave plant. The Z-twist marlin is so remarkably even in diameter that it would be easy to think it was machine made. Close inspection revealed occasional minor variations in diameter, but you had to look very closely. The material has a hard feel and appears to be rather stiff, due to both the nature of the fibre and the firmness of the twisting.

The style of netting in the photo (left) is also remarkable for the evenness of the construction. It is not known if a guide was used, or even some form of netting needle. The colours are presumed to be natural dyes from various botanical sources. They are strong and vibrant, retaining their intensity, probably due to the bag being kept away from sunlight for the decades since it was obtained.

Very few knots were detected in spite of a hopefully thorough inspection. The few that were seen appeared to be Thumb knots, tied very tightly and the ends cut close to the knot. I think this would indicate the considerable experience and confidence of the crafter.

The rim of the bag appears to be a form of a ‘Daisy Chain’ sinnet and the headband is a simple woven piece, reminiscent of the tape material obtained using an Inkle loom.



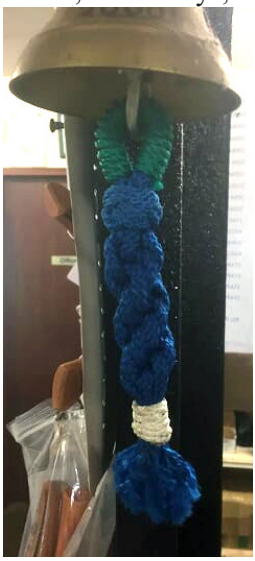
I feel sure that there are Guild members who could have carried out a much more professional investigation and I would welcome comment and enlightenment. In the meantime, I am very happy to have been able to get up close to an extraordinary piece of handcraft.

In closing, I should mention that it is possible to purchase a Bilum and similar handcrafted items, but they ain't cheap and that is only fair. My thanks to Kay Cochrane for the loan of the items.

Mr Murch's Bellrope

by Our West of England Correspondent

Deep in the countryside between the pub and the river there is a place called Mr Murch's Emporium where you can get a vast range of interesting items from times long gone, and next door there is an agricultural supplies business, a real one, where you can get bits for your ancient petrol mower, new tangs for your harrow, a bag of nails, or just tap a wealth of knowledge. Next to the counter hangs a bell for attention-getting purposes. The more I look, these days, the not-uncommon, extremely rudimentary 'piece of string', can often be seen in pubs, and by not a few cottage doors.



Every time I saw this one, I thought I must do something about it. I finally got round to it with the result shown. OK, not a masterpiece worthy of special visits from passing knotsmen but one does what one can. A lot of pubs which should know better have pretty posh bells activated by all sorts, from a bit of wire to an old boot lace. You could almost make a hobby out of visiting obscure country hostelries smartening up deserving bells, I'll have to give it some thought, maybe even a business! Would have fun dreaming up fancy sign-writing for a little van to travel around in. With a hammock in the back to stay legal after each visit!

Military Engineering

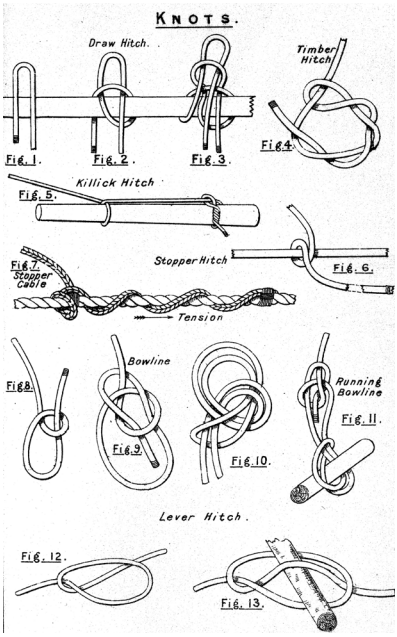
by Richard Hopkins

Following on from Geoffrey Budworth's article on Crimean war knotting applications (*KM* 148) I would like to come to the First World War and the Military Engineering manual part IIIa on *Military Bridging and Materials* published by The General Staff, the War Office in 1913, although my edition is a 1915 reprint.

This fascinating book covers a range of useful topics, and of particular interest to us is the section on knot tying. There are several clear plates to illustrate the knots and the instructions for tying are pretty good.

For example: "To make the bowline lay the forefinger of the right hand along and above the running end, hold the standing part away from the body with the left hand, back down; lay the running end over and at right angles to the standing part just in front of the left hand: turn the right hand over and outwards, bringing the forefinger up through the small loop which is formed on the standing part; then holding this small loop with the left hand, pass the running end under the standing part and up again, and then down through the small loop and haul tight."

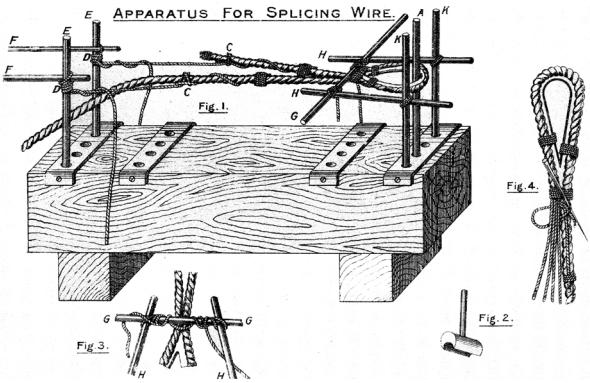
The knots covered start with a Thumb knot then go on with Figure Eight, Reef knot, Draw hitch which we often call the Highwayman's hitch, Single and Double Sheet bend, Hawser bend, Half Hitch, Two Half hitches, Round Turn and Two Half hitches, Rolling hitch, Fisherman's bend, Clove Hitch, Split Clove Hitch, Magnus hitch, Timber hitch, Killick hitch, Stopper hitch, Bowline, Bowline on a bight, Running Bowline, Lever hitch, Man-harness hitch, Running knot, Slip knot, Blackwall hitch, Double Blackwall hitch, a second Draw knot which we call a Slipped Reef and Catspaw.



Lashings are also covered as well as using blocks, derricks, gins, and shears. The manual also covers splicing, both long and short as well as eye-splicing. After showing

how to sling a load, the way that rope is made is explained and instructions are given for making improvised wire rope with the note that when making your own wire rope you can make sure that the coils are not too heavy to be manageable when carrying them over difficult terrain.

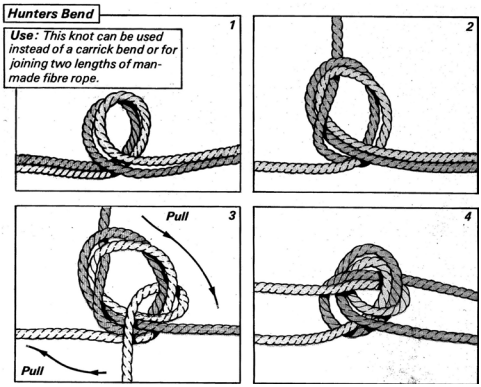
A short, 6ft, riggers bench, 18in wide and 15in thick on 9in square supports, is shown for splicing wire rope but it could also be used for more normal ropework. One fact that I learned is that the weight of a cavalryman and horse in marching order is about 1400 lbs of which about three fifths or 850 lbs are borne on the front legs which explains why you do not want to be trodden on by a horse.



I do not know the scale of issue of this manual but doubt if it was intended for the average sapper, unless studying for promotion.

For an even more recent manual, the *Basic Combat Engineering Skills* was, I believe, issued to all new recruits to the Royal Engineers. My edition is dated 1981 and is also a Crown publication. This book covers many of the topics of the WW1 Book but in less detail and mainly through the use of pictures. The text is kept to a minimum but is clear where it is needed.

The construction of cordage is explained, and the text continues on how to uncoil new cordage, before showing the knots. Again, we start with the Thumb knot and Figure Eight, Reef knot, Carrick bend, Hunters bend (note that this was adopted by the Royal Engineers some time before the IGKT was formed) Double Sheet Bend, Timber hitch, Clove Hitch, Fisherman's bend, Draw hitch, Round Turn and Two Half hitches, Square and Diagonal lashings. The illustrations give examples of the knots in use in practical applications.



Reeving tackles and precautions when hoisting loads are covered, but with the use of mobile cranes there is not the same range of applications, although basic instructions on many more tools used by the combat engineer are given.

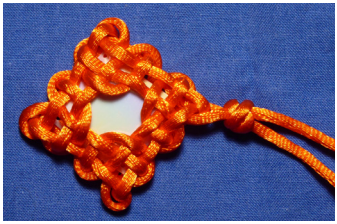
Popping Round the Corner

by Europa Chang Dawson

So far all the Pan Chang variations shown in *KM* have been woven with straight finger-bights. Now we look at the possibilities when the bights go round corners. The expression used for these in Chinese may be translated as 'turned-' or 'deflected-weave', while Lydia Chen uses 'shiftweave'. However both 'turned-' and 'deflected-' have precise meanings in a weaver's vocabulary, and I was unable to determine whether 'shiftweave' was intended as a general description or only a name for a particular category. Consequently, I am describing this set of knots as Pan Changs with bendy bights.

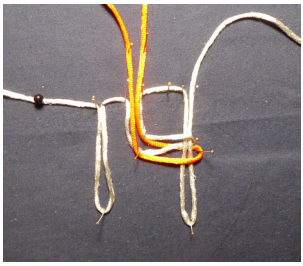
The finger-bights may be angled 'forwards' (heading clockwise as the knot is tied in the demonstrations), 'backwards' (the opposite angle) or 'reflex' (turning back on itself). The demonstrations here will only show those knots tied to leave an open centre; the bendy bight Pan Changs with interwoven centres will come in a later article. Beginning with forward-turning bendy bights:

This knot makes a good bezel, and is shown here with a large, shaped sequin set in the centre.

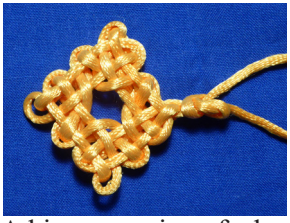


Until the early 20th century, when a girl's marriage was no longer necessarily arranged, a bride on her wedding day was transported from her father's house to that of her father-in-law. She arrived as a stranger into a community that was already established, and her trousseau, as well as her husband's position within his clan, defined her status.

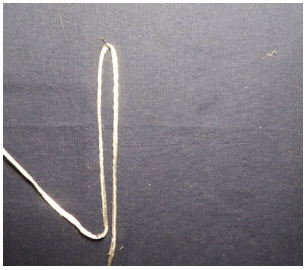
By custom, the bride's jewels would include a necklace of semi-precious beads or (until cultured pearls became commercially available) pearls, these having been purchased in small numbers whenever her family had the funds. Between groups of beads, small jade pieces (1.2mm x 1.2mm x 0.2mm) incised with symbols of blessing could be strung to lengthen the necklace. When times were hard, groups of beads could be sold and the remainder re-strung or stitched on to a band, and the change helped to disguise the disappearance of the others, so saving face. The jade plaques were always the last to go, and when there were no other pieces, they would be set in these bezels.

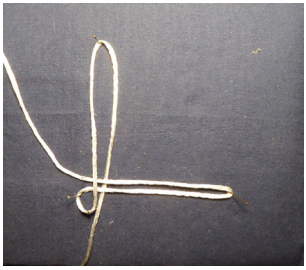


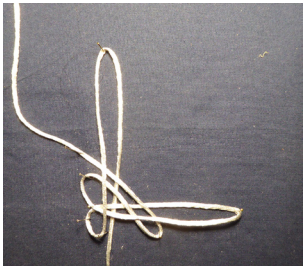
A closed version of this knot, that cannot hold anything, may be tied by using the same change-of-layers twist as for making a vein (cf *KM* 148). As the cord-path is the same as for the bezel, there is only one picture in which the yellow cord shows the difference in path, with the cord entering the upper layer after it has curled round, and emerging from the lower layer. This gives another version of the Knot of Returning, possibly an older form, but is also known as the 'mouth' knot, the ideogram for mouth being □.

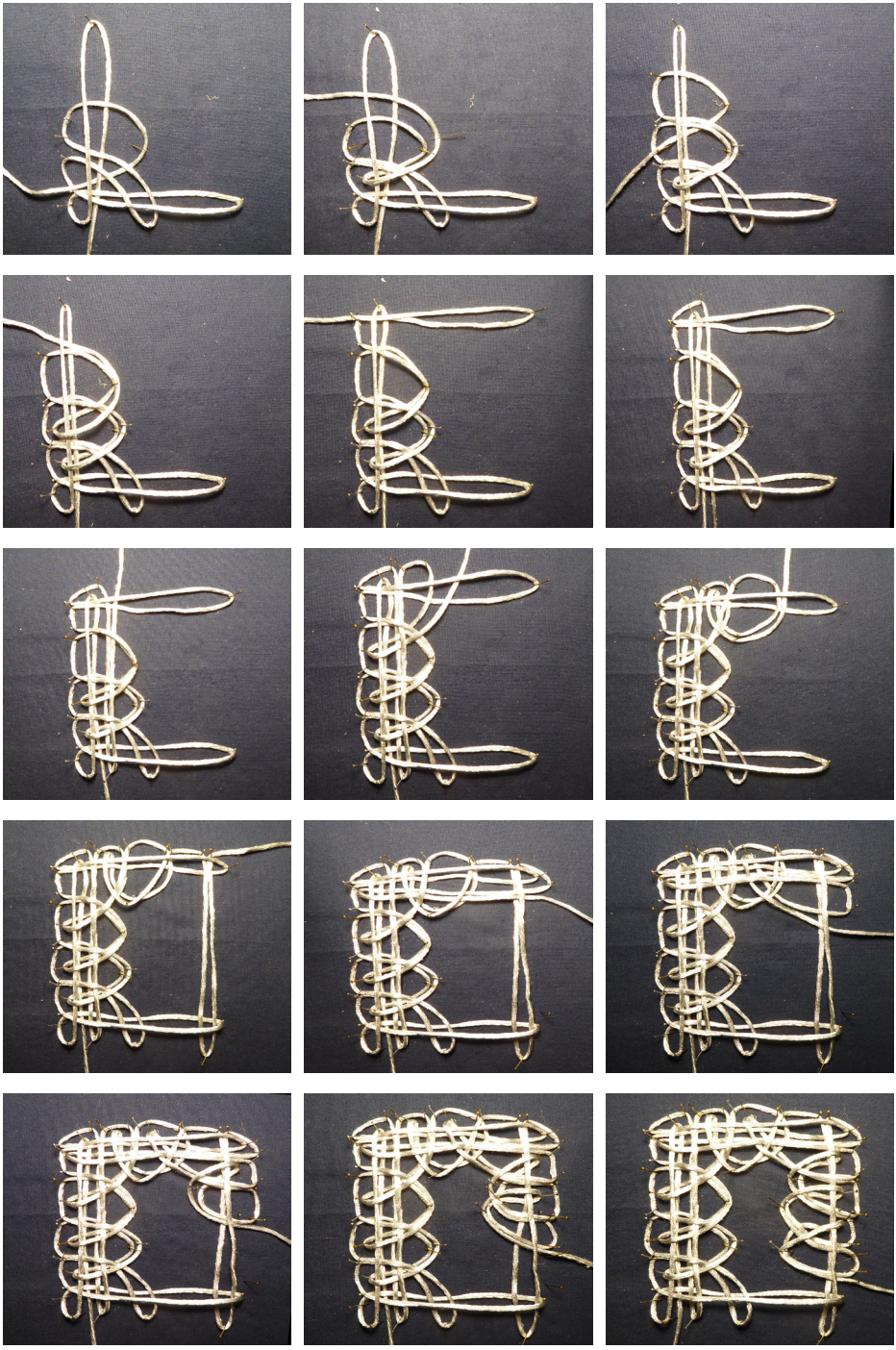


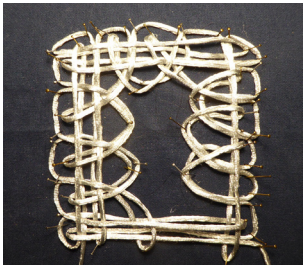
A bigger version of a bezel, to accommodate a square or rectangular card or plaque may be tied by using reflex bendy-bights, thus:









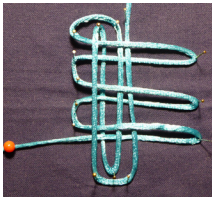
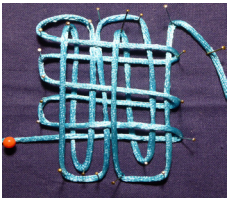
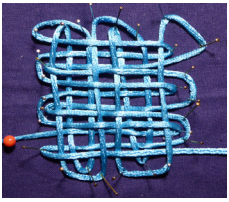


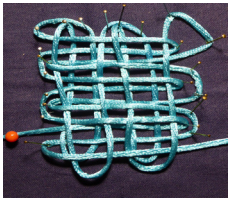
Usually rectangular bezels would be tied, and then the ends stitched together. A separate doubled cord would pass through the centre top, behind the card and down through the centre of the base to end in a pair of tassels; the card could be stitched to this cord for extra security.

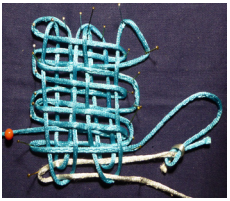
NB the demonstration sequence gives a rectangle, but the photo of the completed knot is in square form and would have been hung as a lozenge.

The reflex bendy-bights may also be used on their own, and without leaving a gap for the next bight on. These 'pockets' or 'caps' were useful for covering hard metal parts of an item of jewellery. The full court dress of a mandarin would include a belt with the carved buckle of semi-precious stone and a loop of steel to fit the buckle. Placed in a jewel box, the steel loop could damage delicate carvings or soft gold, so that part of the belt was always put away with a cover.

It is tied thus:





I like to finish the open-end of the cap by running the cord through the bights a second time, to strengthen the edge. This has been demonstrated in a contrast colour. Again the demonstration gives a rectangular shape while the knot with the ring was tied as a square. This is an interesting variation on the usual Pan Chang forms, for the end does not return to the starting point.

Novel Rope Access Material

by US Rigging

Let's face it, if you're a tree surgeon, or anyone using static climbing ropes regularly, your ropes are probably deteriorating from 'milking'.

Since kernmantle ropes have been available, climbing trees has become much easier, but the 'milking situation' is getting worse. Pelican Rope has come out with their Tree Viper Rope which solves the issue.

What is 'milking'? Rope milking is what happens when the sleeve of your rope stretches over its core. This seems to be the biggest problem when you're working with friction hitches or splicing both ends.

Causes of milking:

- Using friction hitches
- A core material that is too soft
- Splicing both ends of your rope

Usually if you're working with 24-strand ropes, rope milking is going to be a thorn in your side. If you are an experienced climber you will already know the signs of milking: bubbles in your rope, the cover getting all baggy. It can be dangerous. Milking can actually make the eyes in your ropes less stable, which can be a major safety concern.

Maybe you are someone who 'pre-milks' your new ropes. Your rope will be a bit safer, but however you are doing it, it is probably a chore.

The Tree Viper Solution

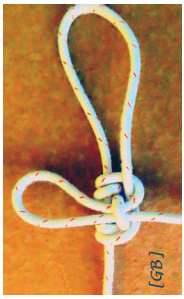
All-Polyester ropes, Tachyon cores, and even 24-strand braid have been part of the evolution in climbing ropes. Pelican Rope's Tree Viper is a new development.

The Tree Viper is a 24-strand climbing rope made with a nylon core and polyester cover. Its 24 strands and 11.8mm diameter mean you get the perfect bounce-to-firmness balance you want in a climbing rope. The polyester cover makes it easy to handle, and the nylon core means that milking is no longer a problem.

No need to run across a football field with your rope tied to a goalpost to make sure you get all the milking out. No need to cut off the inches of the rope that get scrunched up. No need to worry about whether your rope is still safe because it's connected to a friction hitch.

The Farrimond Friction Hitch

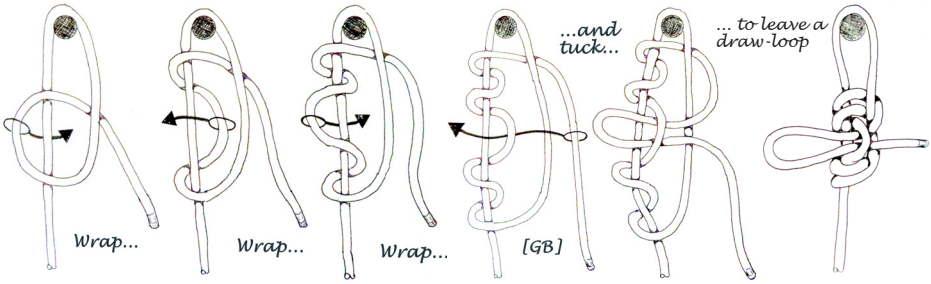
by Geoffrey Budworth



This handy slide-and-grip knot will tension ridge lines, guy lines, washing lines, and anything else needing an adjustable taut-line hitch. It's a triple wrap-and-tuck knot, tied in the bight, with a quick-release draw-loop.

The knot's originator is the English actor and musician Barry Farrimond, best known for his character Ed Grundy in the long-running British radio soap opera *The Archers*, which began in 1951 and is now approaching its 20,000th episode. Away from the microphone, Barry is a keen outdoorsman who first demonstrated this friction hitch in 2008, and is credited with its discovery or invention.

[The IGKT received a BBC Radio 4 mention on 24th September 2020, when Barry told the English broadcaster Claire Balding about it on a hike across Dartmoor National Park in Devon.]



Mother Nature Gets Knotted

by Colin Byfleet

Below is the abstract from a paper published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, USA* in 2007. It was considered so outstanding that it later won the IgNobel Prize in Physics for 2008. The citation reads: "Dorian Raymer of the Ocean Observatories Initiative at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, USA, and Douglas Smith of the University of California, San Diego, USA, for proving mathematically that heaps of string or hair or almost anything else will inevitably tangle themselves up in knots."

We've all suffered from cords of all types becoming tangled if left to themselves. A previous 2007 paper, *The Tangled Web of Self-Tying Knots,* by Andrew Belmonte, showed it to be a well-documented and surprisingly important trait.

Spontaneous knotting of an agitated string (Abstract)

It is well known that a jostled string tends to become knotted; yet the factors governing the 'spontaneous' formation of various knots are unclear. We performed experiments in which a string was tumbled inside a box and found that complex knots often form within seconds. We used mathematical knot theory to analyse the knots. Above a critical string length, the probability P of knotting at first increased sharply with length but then saturated below 100%.

This behaviour differs from that of mathematical self-avoiding random walks, where P has been proven to approach 100%. Finite agitation time and jamming of the string due to its stiffness result in lower probability, but P approaches 100% with long, flexible strings.

We analysed the knots by calculating their Jones polynomials via computer analysis of digital photos of the string. Remarkably, almost all were identified as prime knots: 120 different types, having minimum crossing numbers up to 11, were observed in 3,415 trials. All prime knots with up to seven crossings were observed. The relative probability of forming a knot decreased exponentially with minimum crossing number and Möbius energy, mathematical measures of knot complexity. Based on the observation that long, stiff strings tend to form a coiled structure when confined, we propose a simple model to describe the knot formation based on random ''braid moves'' of the string end. Our model can qualitatively account for the observed distribution of knots and dependence on agitation time and string length.

The full paper, which can be downloaded as a pdf, is at
https://www.pnas.org/content/104/42/16432.abstract

Amateur Ropemaking in Yorkshire

by Sheila and David Pearson

We were recently approached by no less a body than the Editorial Board of *Knotting Matters* to make a 3-strand rope, approximately 2m x 10-12mm, with each strand in a different colour. This was for demonstrating splicing etc to better illustrate the process. "Great!" we thought, we had made no rope this year, and as last year we made over 500 ropes, we were suffering from withdrawal symptoms, so happy to accept the opportunity. It turned out to be an unexpected challenge.

About 98% of our normal pre-Covid rope-making, is to demonstrate rope-making as a craft. We attend Waterways Festivals, Country Fairs etc. and let children, and adults, make their own rope long enough for skipping.

We obtain all our materials free, predominantly carpet yarn, mainly wool, some synthetic, some knitting wool, anything we can get at the right Yorkshire price, "Nowt"! (nothing).

For the finished rope to be approx 10-12mm we mix various different yarns and colours together. Introducing some coloured yarns illustrates very quickly to the person winding, and any audience, how the winding is putting a twist in the strands.

We have a 'Heath Robinson' contraption made by David, consisting of a long piece of wood in which are spaced numerous eyelets. This is fastened horizontally to our clothes line with the required number of cops of yarn, (usually 6-8), underneath. Each yarn is passed through an eyelet, then all the yarns together pass through a metal ring on a Workmate. With the aid of a power drill, the bunch of yarns are wound on to a reel. When we are out in the field, we can pull off the mixture of yarns in one go to lay up, this saves a lot of walking. It doesn't matter that the yarns are different thicknesses, as the same combination is on each hook. The person winding ends up with an attractive multi-coloured rope.

This commission required just one colour on each hook, and we did not have any of the same thickness in three colours of yarns.

We began to experiment with a varying number of yarns for each strand. Simple? Definitely not.

Using a Vernier seemed a good idea for checking that we had the same thickness on each hook, but practically did not work.

The difficulty was closing the Vernier to the exact same degree of tightness on each bunch of strands, when we were dealing with very soft materials. Any ideas anyone?

We had quite a few attempts at making up the rope, only to find that one colour did not lay snugly. Unwound back to the separate yarns and added or took out yarns from the offending strand, then started again. This happened quite a few times and tested our tempers. We had always considered ourselves reasonable rope-makers until now. Pride comes before a fall, and what should have been a pleasant easy job turned out to be an exasperating afternoon. Yorkshire grit and determination prevailed in the end and we thankfully and joyously produced quite an attractive rope. Job's a good'un!

Editors' thanks to S&D Pearson Inc for so readily accepting this commission.

Tom Bowling

by Des Pawson

Geoffrey Budworth's 'British Army Knots & Splices' reminded me of the influence of the French army on knotting publications in the English language. Ashley pointed out the puzzling names of knots in *The Book of Knots* written under the author's pseudonym Tom Bowling.

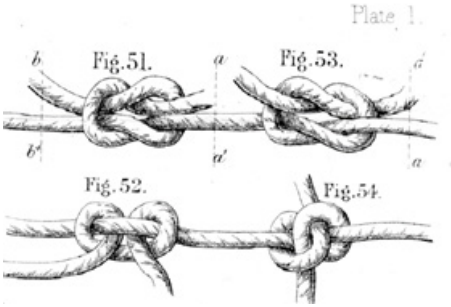
This puzzle was finally solved when the French source from which the illustrations were borrowed was identified. It was *Traité de l'art de la Charpenterie* (Treatise on the art of Carpentry), published between 1837 and 1843 in Paris and Liège. It was originally in two volumes of text and an 'atlas' volume of plates. The work went on to be published, in French, in 18 slightly differing editions between 1842 and 1985, and was held by 24 libraries worldwide.

In Volume 2[1], a chapter XLVII is titled 'Les Noeuds' (the knots) and there are listed plates (nos 151 and 152) designed by Le Col Emy, Colonel Armand Rose Emy (1771-1851) an army officer.

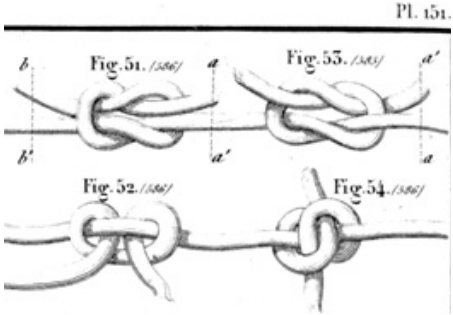
1 Published by Dominique Avanzo et Cie, Liége,1842

It is possible to view this volume online[2]. Regrettably the plates are not so well reproduced, but plates 151 and 152 confirm that they were the French plates of knots as used in Tom Bowling's *Book of Knots*. For example:

Tom Bowling



French source



Close examination of the text of the chapter on knots shows that plate 155 has, amongst other items illustrated, the various seizings and lashings that appear as the plate 3 in Tom Bowling.

It has not been possible to examine closely the many editions of the plates and their related text volumes[3] that were issued over the years, but doubtless the small numbers 584-598 below the figure numbers in the plates reproduced here remain the same.

The fact that Colonel Armand Rose Emy was an innovative writer on timber construction, probably points to Paul Rapsey Hodge being the author. As a civil engineer, he would have very likely seen an early copy of Emy's ground-breaking work and realised the opportunity to turn the chapter on knots into a little book. He took the French introduction and text and just translated it, only leaving out the reference to carpenters and putting in the occasional 'sailor' giving it the nautical feel, reinforced by using the pseudonym 'Tom Bowling'.

In reality Paul Rapsey Hodge/Tom Bowling was a translator rather than an author. Interestingly the plates for *The Book of Knots* were also created by the same London Lithographers Vincent Brooks as *Instruction in Military Engineering* written about by Geoffrey Budworth.

For a full bibliography, commentary with a text and image comparison can be found in the 46-page *Museum of Knots & Sailor's Ropework* Monograph #13 *Tom Bowling & the Book of Knots* by Gordon Perry & Des Pawson, available from IGKT supplies £5 plus postage.

2 http://books.google.fr/books?id=AKo9AAAAcAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=fr&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false (https://tinyurl.com/1vc2kh8q)

3 In 2013 there was a complete set of the 1841-1842 Edition being offered for £2,250.

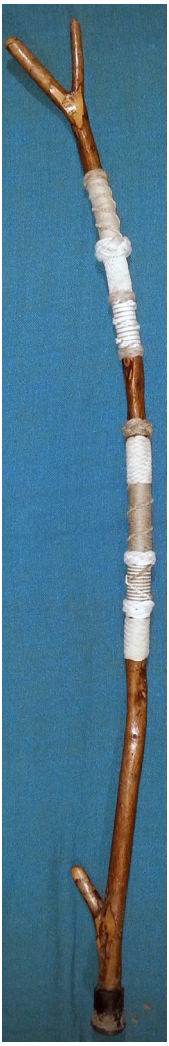
A Hitch that Hiked the Spirits

by Vernon Hughes

When walking into a Wiltshire (UK) pub for lunch with non-knotty friends, pre-lockdown, the possibility of seeing a bell-rope might just have been in the back of the knotsman's mind, but nothing more than that. So, how remarkable it was, on entering The Stag at Hinton Charterhouse (just south-east of Bath, a mile off the A36) to be confronted by a substantial structural pillar covered from top to toe with perfectly executed French Hitching.

Given the dimensions of pillar and rope the high-quality work would not have been a job for a novice or the faint-hearted, and the length of rope used must have cost a bob or two (old English expression). By a remarkable coincidence I had a partially dressed thumb-stick in the car that day on which, inter alia, there were sections of French hitching, as well as Moku and St Mary's hitching, the last mentioned having been picked up from Des Pawson's *Knot Craft*.

A quick dash back to the car was called for, to get the stick and point out the coincidence to the wonder and awe of bar staff and friends. Well, let's just say that I got a kick out of it anyway. Finding distinctive knotting used in modern décor and at that level of quality, hiked the spirits. Attempts to make contact with the tyer were unsuccessful but there was a suggestion that he had served in the Royal Navy.



A few words about the stick may be of some interest including reasons for embarking on the project. The stick is a section of traditionally-used hazel stem, cut locally. It was seasoned and varnished, for effect, after twig joints had been rounded and sanded.

It is a working stick in which the natural hook towards the base was retained for dragging remote blackberry stems into reach. To sustain a consistent character only natural fibres were being used in the knotwork.

Knots were applied randomly as ideas evolved rather than to any pre-conceived plan.

On a straight stick, a more formal knotting approach does, of course, have great merit, and one such was covered by a late knotsman from South Wales (UK) whose knot production was prodigious. He had served in the Royal Navy, and in retirement put in a great effort at his local Sea Cadet group where knot-work abounded. He had asked if I could make him, on the lathe, a walking stick from a garden stake in highly durable Iroko that he had fished out of a Welsh river. The finished article, complete with spherical knob, ready for covering, was duly handed over a couple of months later, to his delight.

His way of thanking me was to present me with another stick, the leather-worked one (right) plus the second Iroko stake. He had lately become enthused by the use of leather.

But why dress a stick the reader may ask? I will come to that but, firstly, need to explain a personal rule applied to any craft work including my main hobby, woodturning. It is that, in order to compensate for a lack of artistic talent, work is restricted to making articles that have a use or purpose (anything from a Windsor Chair to stools, pencil pots, light-pulls or tool handles, etc, and even a different style of walking stick incorporating twenty seven woods of the world).

I extend this utilitarian principle into knotting, but with a twist, in that knot-work which is not useful in itself can be applied to useful items for the purpose of decoration or enhancement. This satisfies the creative instinct and pleases an eye that has, since childhood, appreciated the appearance and regularity of form found in cord-work. Decorating (dressing) a stick provides a substantial opportunity to practice knot-tying purposefully, and to work out one's enthusiasm for the craft in a personal way that has the potential to give enduring pleasure. And finally, such an article advertises our craft (and despite experience at The Stag Inn), has some potential to attract a measure of interest from others.

Interestingly, an old walking stick covered with knotting recently sold in a TV auction programme in UK for £100. The camera moved too quickly but the grip appeared to be a single knot (perhaps a star) and the whole stem was covered immaculately with a spiral knot resembling French hitching.

Trefoil with 8-Strand Plait

by Richard Wilcox

At the 2007 IGKT NAB meeting in Orange City, Florida, I had the privilege of learning several knots from Jeff Wyatt. Fortunately, I made a video of the lessons. As an amateur videographer I didn't catch all the nuances of the tying. I got enough to get started when I had got back home. One of the knots was an 8-strand plaited Trefoil. I tied several trefoils and did some Turks Heads as a continuous loop. After reading Geoffrey Budworth's 'A Mobius Challenge', I looked back at the video and worked for three full days until I had got it right, I worked several hours before I repeated my success. I enclose possible quirks to watch for as you tie 8-strand plaited trefoil.

The first step is to tie a 4-strand trefoil as a base. 1/8inch, (3mm) cord takes about 63in of cord to make a small trefoil. You will notice a loop at the end of the 63in. I don't cut the cord until done. Hold the loop and tie an Overhand knot, continue holding the loop and tie another Overhand knot. (Photos 1 and 2)

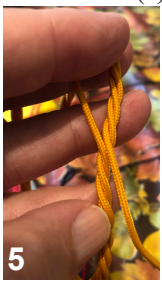
1

2

3

If done right you have tied a Granny knot on top of a single loop. (3) Put one Overhand knot on top and one on the bottom and wrap the working end around the loops until you have a 4-strand cord with the ends meeting at the end, and fuse the ends. (4) If you always lay to the right of the standing part when you cross it, and follow the lay of the cord, the ends should meet. (5) I pull the two loops along a tape measure to make a 3in double loop. This base is the Trefoil or Trinity knot. Some call it the Trinity knot because it has three loops for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and it is continuous or never-ending.

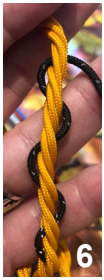
4

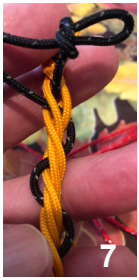

5

The 8-strand plait is simple. It is always over two under two. But there are some 'watch-outs'.

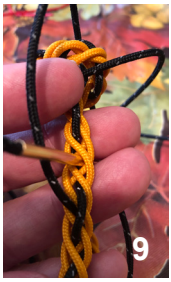
I suggest that you start by using two colours, one colour to make the 4-strand base and a second for the other four strands.

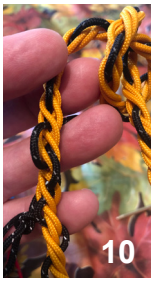
The first run of over-two under-two should always lay flat, to the right and left of the base cord. (6) You can keep the loop sizes the same and it will help in tracking the next three runs. When you meet the standing part, the two ends should not meet. (7) If they meet you have probably gone over three or under three somewhere in the first pass.

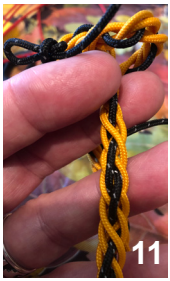




The working end will look like it is at right angles to the standing part. (7) To correct this, pull the working part back up against the left side of the standing part so they are side by side with a base cord running between them. (8,8A)







Start the second pass by crossing in front of the standing part (crossing over the cord between the standing and running parts and over the next cord before going under the next two cords). (9)

In this pass you will go under two cords that are bisected by the next loop coming out of the base. (10, 11) Note that when you turn over the cord to look at the working cord coming out of the two you went under, the working part may appear to be at right angles to the next same colour working loop. If so, you must pull the working cord back until it is next to the loop of the same colour separated by one cord from the base. (12)

Then go over one in front of the loop and over another before going under the next two. Note: always line up your working end so that it is on the left of the same colour loop that has split the two cords you are going over.

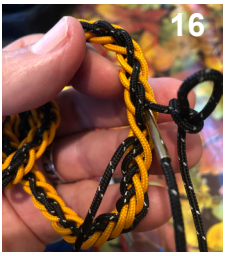
Also note you are going down under two cords that are going to the left and right of the next same colour loop because this next same colour loop splits the two cords you are going under, right after you go under the two cords. (13)

It is easiest if you keep turning over your work so that you are always working 180 degrees from the last under two threading.

The second time you come to the standing part, the working end may again look like it is at right angles to the standing part, so just be sure to pull back along the last same colour loop that is splitting the cords so you can continue the same pattern.

The last three passes will always start coming out of the base on the left side of a loop with a base cord between the working end and the loop. (14) If you don't continually adjust the alignment you will end up with a pattern like the yellow and blue trefoil. (15)

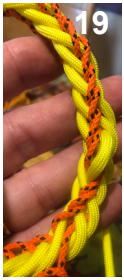
The third and fourth pass through the base should line up better as you go through the base. After you go over two in front of a loop on the third pass you will go down through to cords on the base on the right side of the next loop coming out of the base. (14)



The fourth pass will go down under two that are next to the next loop instead of at the point where the next loop comes out of the base. (16) The last pass will end up meeting the end of the standing part and therefore can be fused. (17)

The 1/8in (3mm) cord made into a 3in x 2 1/2inch trefoil makes an impressive necklace. If you are making it as a Trinity knot I suggest fusing the ends and burying them and using a separate cord to go around the neck.

After trying to tie this knot with one strand and becoming frustrated, I have a couple of suggestions. Once you make the base and the two ends meet and are taped, start your under two over two by going under itself first then under one more before going over two.



To reduce frustration, use a small different-coloured rope to do the under two over two pattern all the way through. You're less likely to become confused by all the same colour cords.

Just be sure when you follow the little rope, you follow the same strand you came out of the base when you go back through the base.

Editors' Note: The author provided a Christian interpretation of the form of the knot which can be found on the website www.igkt.net in the Knotting Matters/Supplements

KNOT ART

by Cavin Richie

While tying the 'real thing' is of course the focus of the IGKT, *KM* 149 had some interesting information about knots as art. I am very fortunate to own a couple of small pieces of 'knot jewellery' that were made by Cavin Richie in the US, who describes himself as a sailor and lover of tying knots. Professionally, he makes one-off pieces of sculpture and jewellery out of shed Elk antler or wood, and then casts these one-off pieces in bronze. The two pendants I have are both just over an inch long.

The Figure of Eight is hand carved in shed Elk antler and is a very fine piece of work, a mere few millimetres thick.

Submitted by
Colin Knightley

The Bowline is in bronze, cast by Cavin, from an original handmade pendant and is a much-loved (and worn) gift from him. Most of his carvings are of wildlife but very occasionally a knot will appear on his website http://www.cavinrichie.com/index.html.

Length of Cord for Monkey's Fists

by Robert Nash

As a new member to the IGKT I, like so many of us, have had time to hone my knotting skills as a means of keeping the little grey cells exercised.

For many years now I have been fascinated by the Monkey's Fist (MF), and over that time, it led me to adapt three to make a South American bolas (boleadoras) which is a throwing device used by gauchos to catch and hobble animals, especially cattle. They have been used as a weapon and in skilful mesmerising dance routines. I witnessed this in Buenos Aires in February 2020. Further research has inspired me to make a small example with 3 x 25mm (1in) steel ball-bearings.

For information on the bolas, try these links:

https://www.sites.google.com/site/paracordist/announcements/paracordbolaswithtriple15steelballmonkeysfists

https://www.etsy.com/uk/listing/643905264/custom-paracord-bolas?ref=search_recently_viewed-20

I made a start using a 25mm ball bearing with 2m (6ft 6in) of 4mm (5/32in) paracord. I found that five passes was the ideal number to cover the core with none showing. Having made the MF, by measuring the excess cord I concluded that the length needed for the actual knot was just short of 1.5m (5ft). This was used as my bench mark.

I also realised that the number of passes was crucial to the way the MF would look once finished, the core being fully covered by the cord. From my bench mark, I estimated that the number of passes that would give full coverage is 80% of the core diameter in mm.

I made several other MFs from ball bearings with diameters: 30mm (1 3/16in), 35mm (1 3/8in), 40mm (1 9/16in): golf balls: 43mm (1 11/16in); tennis balls: 63mm (2 1/2in). For each MF, I guessed the length of cord required, and used as many passes necessary to cover the different sized cores. These trials led me to construct a formula.

The length of cord needed to form a MF for a given core, using a given cord diameter and the required number of passes for each of the three layers is:

1. To calculate the number of passes (p) required to give good coverage of a core of diameter (D) with cord of diameter (d), we have

$$p = \frac{0.8 \times D}{d}$$

2. The length of cord needed is the number of passes multiplied by the circumference (C) ($C=\pi D$) of the core. However, the diameter of the cord needs to be taken into account in calculating the distance the cord needs to travel. By observation and measurement, an estimate of 2d should be added to the core diameter to account for the multiple layers of cord. The overall diameter thus becomes D + 2d.

3.There are usually three layers in an MF.

4. I therefore propose the following Nash's Cord Length Estimator for Monkey's Fists to be

$$\text{Length} = \pi(D + 2d) \times p \times 3$$

where: $\pi = 3.142$
D = Diameter of Core
d = Diameter of cord
p = Number of passes

Table: Actual lengths used compared to lengths calculated from the formula:

Core	Core Diam mm	Cord Diam mm	No. Passes p	Calculated Length mm	Length used mm	Surplus cord mm	Accuracy %
Ball Bearing	25	4	5	1556	1450	106	7
Ball Bearing	30	4	6	2149	2080	69	3
Ball Bearing	35	4	7	2838	2525	313	12
Ball Bearing	40	4	8	3620	3527	93	3
Golf Ball	43	4	9	4327	3930	397	10
Tennis Ball	63	8	6	4411	4120	291	7

Points of Note

1. The length of cord calculated from the formula inevitably gives a small surplus after tightening. Any added elements, such as lanyards or other knots, will need extra cord. From a practical point of view, I found it useful to round up the estimated cord length to the next half metre to cater for tying and tightening.

2. Different materials have different qualities of stiffness and stretch, while different tyers work to various tensions. This means allowing a little extra.

3. So far, I have found the formula to be generally workable for any number of passes, core or cord size.

4. I have produced an Excel spreadsheet for different cord and rope diameters available commercially with a range of different core sizes. I have also added several tables for those who might not be happy working with the formula; they can be used as a ready reckoner.

5. There is also a table that allows the user to insert their own values for the materials used, which will calculate the approximate lengths required.

I have found that the formula works for me and I hope that others find it useful. Please try it out and give any feedback, good or bad, so that I can test its usefulness. Someone said "Theory may inform, but practice convinces"

In the picture, Monkey's Fists: BLUE: 25mm ball bearing, RED: 40mm ball bearing, GREEN: 43mm golf ball, JADE: 62mm tennis ball.
Ball bearings: L to R 25/30/35/40mm
Mini-bolas using 25mm ball bearings and 4mm paracord.

Robert Nash's spreadsheet will go onto the *KM* website (www.igkt.net) under Knotting Matters/Supplements. It and the tables it contains will allow members to look up or calculate measurements for their own Monkey's Fist projects.

Normally this would be taken down when the June edition is published. If members find this extra information helpful and interesting they should let the author (rgn9725@yahoo.co.uk) know so that a more permanent position on the IGKT website can be sought.

It would not hurt to write to the Editors so that other members can profit from your experience too!

Have you applied for a place at the online AGM on May 8th 2021?

PUBLICATIONS GROUP

The Publications Group have been busy since the last issue of *Knotting Matters*. We are pleased to give advance notice of a new publication from one of our founder members and past-President, Geoffrey Budworth, entitled *Trambling*.[1] Devised by Desmond Mandeville, the Trambling technique involves moving a working or standing end of a knot, generally a bend, to create a new knot. Desmond took this to an art form and much of his work was published in early editions of *KM*. Geoffrey has streamlined the text and added further information from his study of Desmond's copious notes and drawings. The book is now with the *KM* editors to prepare for printing.

A collection of articles from the past 150 editions of *KM* with the common theme of Turks Heads have been gathered together and edited by Frank Brown and Colin Byfleet. This is still at the proof stage and we are looking forward to publishing the collection soon.

The series of IGKT Knot Charts have been in existence from the early days of the Guild. Originally available as hard copies from the Supplies Secretary, they were digitised just over ten years ago and made available on the website. Since then, a few errors have come to light, and the text on a number of charts was found to be poorly reproduced. Work has been going on to correct these issues and, hopefully, by the time you read this, the updated charts will have replaced the originals on the website.

In carrying out the Knot Charts work, we also corrected one of the drawings from *Charlie's Knots* (7Bx5L TH) and so have also corrected the file ready for reprinting. In the meanwhile if anyone has the printed version they can contact the Supplies Secretary in order to obtain a pdf of the corrected page.

When these current jobs are out of the way, it is the intention of the Publications Group to review the full list of IGKT publications to enable any remedial work to be carried out in advance of any reprints, as well as save them in an Archive.

1. NB the term has nothing to do with the technique of washing tin ore with a shovel in a frame fitted for the purpose.

Sam Lanham

His colleagues will be sad to hear that Sam Lanham died on November 29th 2020. Sam was an early member of the Guild, and a founding member of the Texas Branch. Bottle covering and flatwork were his forte. We hope to be able to publish a fuller obituary in the June 2021 issue.

Book Review

A Knot a Day: 365 knot challenges for all abilities by Nic Compton.

2020, Adlard Coles. 368 pp. £16.99

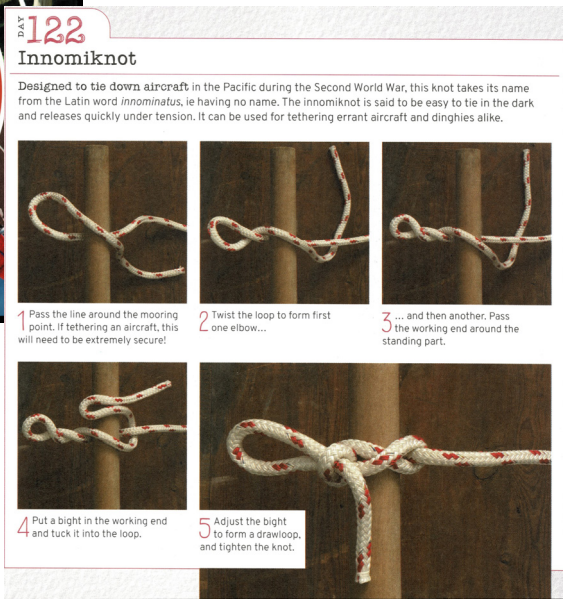
Given that we may be enjoying our own company for longer than desired, this book would be a useful aid to counter boredom for non-knotters. It could also be of interest to those of us who are curious about how knots are explained. In this respect I feel it did very well within the limits of a page a day, sometimes two pages. The numbering of the illustrations was not always as I was expecting.

At almost 200mm square and 35mm thick it is not pocket-size but it does attempt to cover many uses of knots in various categories, Indoor, Outdoor, Fashion, Magic, Craft, Decoration and General.

This shows that the book covers a wide range of knots and their uses although I did have difficulty in following some of the pictures. On the whole, it is well illustrated, but the choice of colour for the neckties and shoe laces made following the words carefully to be even more important.

There is a little 'cheating' when some knots shown on one day then crop up later in their application, each one thus filling two of the 365 days.

The author also wrote the *Knot Bible*, mentioning IGKT and giving credit to Ken Yalden and Colin Byfleet for their help in tying some of the studio knots.


DAY 122

Innomiknot

Designed to tie down aircraft in the Pacific during the Second World War, this knot takes its name from the Latin word *innominatus*, ie having no name. The innomiknot is said to be easy to tie in the dark and releases quickly under tension. It can be used for tethering errant aircraft and dinghies alike.

1 Pass the line around the mooring point. If tethering an aircraft, this will need to be extremely secure!

2 Twist the loop to form first one elbow...

3 ... and then another. Pass the working end around the standing part.

4 Put a bight in the working end and tuck it into the loop.

5 Adjust the bight to form a drawloop, and tighten the knot.

The book would make a useful present to a youngster or someone with only rudimentary knowledge of knots and might just encourage them to learn more. RH

News from the Branches

Branch Roundup

Colin Grundy

With Covid-19 still impacting many populations around the world and many countries with travel restrictions in place, the chance to hold face to face branch meetings still seems to be far in to the future. A few branches have made use of the Guild's Zoom accounts to hold virtual meetings. Numbers attending are rising and as members get more used to the technology, themed meetings and teaching sessions are being held with a great deal of success.

Another bonus of using Zoom to hold virtual meetings is that the geographical location of members is not an issue. Cross-border participation is now becoming commonplace and as well as honing their knot-tying skills, members are able to catch up socially.

If your branch or chapter is holding virtual meetings, write to KM and let us know what you are doing.

Yorkshire Branch – The theme for this meeting was knotted Christmas decorations (screen dump)

Dorset Branch learning the Spanish Ring knot. (screen dump)

Editors' note: Screen dumps are shown only to give a flavour of the occasion, even though they do not make good pictures in print.

YORKSHIRE BRANCH REPORT 2020

Our normal schedule is to have a full day's meeting each March and November, at which attendance averages 20-25, with many from outside Yorkshire. Between those dates we meet up with various members at a large number of events, so keeping in contact. In March, we had to cancel our meeting at fairly short notice due to Covid with no time to arrange any alternative. Then all our 2020 events were cancelled. Very disappointing. As this was likely to be the case for a long time, we considered alternatives. When we heard about the Guild's Zoom account, we immediately booked a meeting for Sunday 15th November. The West Midlands Branch were having their first Zoom meeting before ours and kindly invited us along. It was very enjoyable and also useful.

There was a good response to our invitation from all our regulars. It promised to be fun! David is a technophobe and whilst I had attended many Zoom classes, I had not been the host. After several practices with us each Zooming in different rooms, we settled on a format: I would host the meeting until our members were all in view and audible, then David would take over. We planned for possible problems and I sat armed with phone and tablet, and notices to hold up if all else failed eg "Turn on your audio!"

The theme for our meeting was 'Tools' and many members showed and explained a wide variety of tools they used. We also had a 'Show and Tell' (Colin Grundy's idea, thanks) and saw some of the work that had been done this year. We all agreed that for a first Zoom meeting it had gone quite well and we would try and book another for January, and later in March. Some of our regulars had sent their apologies, some had technical difficulties with Zoom, but we still numbered 14 people, very good for a first virtual meeting.

Another of Colin's good ideas was to invite members who had never been to our meetings including a couple of new members, but sadly no takers.

In these trying times it is more important than ever to keep in contact with people. Zoom doesn't make up for a physical meeting, but it is certainly better than nothing. We may have sent invitations out, maybe even met, before this appears in *KM*, but if you are not on our normal invitation list and would like to join us in future please contact us

David and Sheila Pearson sheilapearson@yahoo.co.uk

Make sure you read all the information concerning the 2021 AGM on May 8th enclosed in this magazine

BRANCHES

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All enquries about this branch: contact the Guild's Web Administrator.

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East Anglian - UK

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Solent - UK

http://igkt-solent.co.uk
Contact: Chris Jenkins
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Surrey - UK

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West Country Knotters - UK

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Yorkshire - UK

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United States of America

Alaskan Branch - USA

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All branch details as on IGKT website on 10/2/21

BACK COVER: Part of Stuart Grainger's *KM* cover design with his monogram p8

IGKT SALES	
A New System of Knotting by Harry Asher - A reprint. Asher's genius is shown really clearly	£7.00
The Sailor and his Knots - A unique reprint of Ashley's 1925 work	£10.00
A Practical Approach to Circular Knotworks by A & C Åström - Circular knots based on a Celtic pattern	£10.00
Knotty Potty by 'Jenny Wren', alias IGKT co-founder Geoffrey Budworth	£4.00
Plaited Moebius Bands by Geoffrey Budworth - A trio of party-trick braids	£2.00
Thou Shalt Knot – Clifford Ashley Exhibition 2017-18. Ed. Christina Connett N. American members please order from Amazon	£11.50
Breast Plate Designs by Brian Field - Designs to make and wear	£3.00
Concerning Crosses and More by Brian Field - Flat Knots tied 'in hand'	£3.00
Knotted Novelties by Eric Franklin - Reprint of *Nylon Novelties*	£3.00
Turksheads the Traditional Way by Eric Franklin - A really useful introduction	£3.00
Knotcraft by Stuart Grainger - A much-loved book about decorative knotting	£4.00
Knotted Fabrics by Stuart Grainger - Making mats, covers, baskets, etc. A reprint of this popular work	£10.00
Turkshead Alternatives by Stuart Grainger - Decorative chains and grommets	£3.00
Breathing Apparatus Guidelines by Colin Grundy - A fascinating story	£4.00
A Comprehensive Text of Turk's Head Knots by James Harvey - A reprint of this great book	£16.00
The DIY Book of Fenders by Colin Jones - Does exactly what it says	£12.95
Advanced Knotting by Maurice McPartlan - An excellent DVD for complex 3D Turks Heads	£12.00
Monographs 1-14 by Des Pawson - Various prices, see full list on website for details	
Decorative Woven Flat Knots (incl pdf) by Skip Pennock - Lots of terrific shapes	£12.50
Design and Make Rope Mats and Rosettes by Nils Kristian Rossing - 'Recipes' for many circular mats	£10.00
Charlie's Knots by Charlie Smith - An easy approach to tying Turks Heads directly in the hand	£3.00
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A Fresh Approach to Knotting and Ropework by Charles Warner - A wonderful work with over 500 diagrams	£15.00
The Wee Lighthouse Knot by Pieter van de Griend	£4.00
The Rope Menagerie and A Ropy Chess Set by Frank Brown - His first set of cord effigies B&W	£8.00
The String Zoo and The Cord Zodiac by Frank Brown - Many more ideas for small cord figures	£14.00
IGKT Car Window Sticker	£2.00
IGKT Cloth Badge	£4.00
IGKT Enamel Badge - clasp or pin fitting	£4.00

Please e-mail **supplies@igkt.net** with your order stating your full postal address to which the items should be sent. We will return a payment request to you (including postage & packing) so that you can make secure payment by PayPal online, using any card.

If you do not use e-mail, please contact the

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